

STUDENTS, EMPLOYEES AND COMMUNITY

Accessibility

Adopted under the Human Rights, Anti-Discrimination and Anti-Racism Policy

1.0 Objective

- 1.0 The Durham District School Board (“DDSB”) adopts this policy/procedure to promote and uphold accessibility and to prevent accessibility barriers in all DDSB learning and working environments.
- 1.1 Providing accessible services and employment are necessary to meet the mandate of the DDSB and to create and foster a culture of care where students and employees can thrive and have a sense of safety, well-being, engagement and belonging. This procedure will set out how the DDSB will meet accessibility needs in a timely manner and to the point of undue hardship.
- 1.2 The DDSB adopts this procedure to better fulfill its obligations and responsibilities under, Ontario’s accessibility laws, including the Ontario Human Rights Code (the “Code”) and the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, S.O.2005, c.11 and the corresponding Ontario regulation 191/11, Integrates Accessibility Standards, as amended (the “AODA”), the Education Act, R.S.O. 1990, c. E.2 and its regulations, as amended (the “Education Act”), and other applicable legislation, and in so doing recognizes that accessibility principles and anti-ableist approaches, actions and initiatives are required to:
- Comply with AODA accessibility standards for customer service, employment, transportation, design public spaces, and information and communications,
 - Establish and maintain a Multi-Year Accessibility Plan (“MYAP”), which outlines its strategy to identify, prevent and remove barriers to persons with disabilities in relation to each area identified in the section above, and review and update the MYAP at least one every five years in consultation with person with disabilities. The DDSB will post the MYAP and progress updates on its website and make available in accessible format upon request.
 - Demonstrate the DDSB’s commitment in actively removing barriers and increasing accessibility and participation for all members of its community and maintain compliance through this procedure.
 - Support equitable access, opportunities, experiences and outcomes for students, employees and community members with different abilities, disabilities and neurodivergent traits.
- 1.3 If a provision of AODA, an accessibility standard or any other regulation under AODA conflicts with a Provision of another statute or regulation, the provision that provides the highest level of accessibility to person with disabilities will prevail.
- 1.4 This procedure must be read together with the Human Rights, Anti-Discrimination and Anti-Racism Policy (the “Human Rights Policy”), the Human Rights Anti-Discrimination and Anti-Racism Procedure (The “Human Rights Procedure”), the Human Rights Inclusive Design and Accommodation Procedure (the “Accommodation Procedure”), and the Human Rights Roles, Responsibilities and Accountability Framework (the “Accountability Framework”)

1.5 The DDSB recognizes the roles, responsibilities, and accountabilities it has to:

- Promote accessibility and anti-ableism
- Identify, prevent, and address ableism and accessibility barriers for students, staff and community members when accessing DDSB services, employment, and learning and working environments.
- Respond to and/address accessibility barriers (including the duty to accommodate under the Code)
- Learn and build capacity about how to apply accessibility principles to all aspects of DDSB learning and working environments
- Provide a mechanism for students, staff, and community members to report accessibility issues/concerns and to raise accessibility complaints.

1.6 A key objective of this procedure is to embed anti-ableism, accessibility, Universal Design for Learning and inclusive design principles to all aspects of DDSB services, employment and learning and working environments. These include:

- Disrupting ableist structures, policies, practices and rules to address individual and systemic accessibility barriers
- Upholding principles of dignity and respect
- Maximizing integration, independence, and participation

This is in keeping with the DDSB's commitment to providing learning and working environments that centre Indigenous rights, human rights, and equity and that are safe, welcoming, respectful, equitable, inclusive, accessible, and free from all forms of discrimination, oppression and harm.

1.7 This procedure is to be interpreted and applied in accordance with the district's commitment to promoting and upholding Indigenous rights and human rights in all its learning and working environments. This includes anti-colonial, anti-discriminatory and anti-racist approaches, and actions to provide services and employment that are safe, welcoming, respectful, inclusive, equitable, accessible, and free from discrimination and harassment consistent with the, DDSB's Indigenous Education Policy, the Human Rights Policy, the Safe and Respectful Workplace and Harassment Prevention Policy and related procedures.

1.8 This policy applies to DDSB employees, trustees, students, parents/guardians, volunteers, permits holders, contractors, customers, and other members of organizations not related to the DDSB but who nevertheless work on or are invited onto DDSB premises or utilize DDSB services.

2.0 Definitions

- 2.1 “Customer” refers to any person who uses the services of the DDSB.
- 2.2 “Goods” are discrete items like books, food, software, etc., provided by DDSB. This Procedure applies to accessing goods, and not to the accessibility of goods.
- 2.3 “Services” are things like education and public washrooms provided by the DDSB services are expected to be accessible.
- 2.4 “Facilities” refers to rooms or spaces used to provide a service if the DDSB. IT does not refer to the physical structure of a building.

Other key human rights and accessibility terms used in this procedure are defined in (Appendix A Glossary of Terms) of the Human Rights Policy.

3.0 Procedure

Each employee, as appropriate to their individual role and within the scope of their authority and influence, must comply with this procedure and must contribute to shared organizational responsibilities for accessibility.

The DDSB Recognizes:

- a) The broad and evolving definition of disability under the Ontario Human Rights Code and case law, and increasing understanding of neurodiversity and the social model of disability
- b) Stigmatization and negative biases, attitudes, perceptions, assumptions and traits based on abilities, disabilities, and neurodiversity (including and not limited to assumptions about functional limitations, low expectations, learning disabilities, differences in behaviors, social interactions cognitive processing and communication, etc.);
- c) Unique accessibility barriers (for example attitudinal, physical, architectural, information/communication or technological barriers) for people based on abilities, disabilities, neurodivergent traits, mental health disabilities, addictions and disabilities that may be “invisible”, episodic, temporary and/or permanent.
- d) Inequitable and disproportionate educational and employment access, opportunities, experiences and outcomes for students, employees and community members with different abilities, disabilities and neurodivergent traits;
- e) Individuals may experience disability-related barriers differently (in other words, not everyone with the same type of disability may have the same accessibility needs).

The DDSB is committed to: addressing ableism and discriminatory barriers related to the medical and functional models of disability (including through professional development and learning); supporting inclusive and accessible environments; recognizing and affirming neurodiversity, the social model of disability and individual strengths, abilities and talents; and accommodating disability-related needs in accordance with the Human Rights Policy, and the Accommodation Procedure, to the point of undue hardship.

3.1 Training

The DDSB is committed to training all staff and volunteers including all persons who participate in developing the organization’s policies, or who provide goods, services, or facilities on behalf of the DDSB in accessible customer service, other applicable Ontario Accessibility Standards and aspects of the Ontario Human Rights Code that relate to persons with disabilities. Training of our employees and volunteers on accessibility relates to their specific roles, including:

- Purpose of the AODA
- How to interact with and communicate with people with various types of abilities, disabilities and neurodivergent traits including written format to meet accessibility requirements
- How to use equipment or devices that may help with providing services to people with disabilities and neurodivergent traits, as applicable to their roles and responsibilities
- What to do if a person with a disability or neurodivergent traits is having difficulty in accessing DDSB services, employment, or facilities

We train individuals as soon as practicable after being hired and provide training on any new or any significant changes to existing accessibility policies and procedures. These records are available upon request to persons who received the applicable goods or services.

In addition to formal training, each school and system department must develop an implementation plan to meet the objectives and requirements of the Human Rights Policy, the Human Rights Procedure, and this procedure, which includes;

- Embedding accessibility principles into their work and implementing the requirements of the DDSB's Accessibility Plan
- Identifying, preventing, and addressing potential accessibility barriers in schools and classrooms, community engagement, academic and corporate services, and across the organization

3.2 Assistive Devices

Assistive devices are tools, technology or other mechanisms that enable a person with disabilities to do everyday tasks and activities. People with disabilities may use their personal assistive devices when accessing our services or facilities. DDSB ensure that our staff are trained and familiar with various assistive devices that are used or made available in the workplace, as applicable to their roles and responsibilities.

Where use of any assistive devices is not possible under the DDSB's policies and procedures alternate arrangements must be considered and made available by DDSB where possible.

3.3 Information and Communications

We communicate with people in ways that take into account various abilities, disabilities, and neurodiversity, including, where reasonable;

- Use of accessible and inclusive communication and information formats for students, families, caregivers, and staff
- Use of public web content that is compliant with AODA accessibility standards including Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) 2.0 Level AA
- Use of accessible best practices in classroom instruction, presentations, workshops, and meetings, both online and in person
- Provide multiple methods for the public to provide feedback.
- Notify the public about the availability of accessible formats and communication support
- Offering alternative or conversion-ready formats for all public DDSB documents and communications upon request and consulting with the person making such request to determine the suitability of the format or communication support. If DDSB determines that information or communications are unconvertible, it will provide the person requesting the information or communication with (a) an explanation as to why the information or communication are unconvertible; and (b) summary of the unconvertible information or

- communications.
- Maintaining an Accessibility section on the DDSB website which contains relevant information, communications and contact information, including the availability of accessible formats and communication supports.

3.4 Service Animals

Service animal refers to an animal that is being used to provide accommodation support to a person with a disability, either readily apparent or supported by a letter from a regulated health professional. DDSB welcomes people and their service animals and a separate and specific Policy, Use of Service Animals in Schools, outlines our commitment and requirements and accompanies this procedure.

Where use of any service animal is not possible under the DDSB's Policies and procedures alternate arrangements must be considered and made available by the DDSB where possible.

3.5 Notice of Temporary Disruption

In the event of a planned or unexpected disruption to services or a facility for individuals with disabilities, we will notify the community as soon as it is known. Examples of disruption may include:

- An accessibility entrance door button being temporarily out of function
- An elevator shut down for repairs
- Temporary unavailability of a barrier free washroom

Notification includes but is not limited to, information about the reason for the disruption, anticipated duration and description of alternative facilities or service accommodation if any are available. Notification will be posted in a visible area on site, posted on school website or by any other means reasonable (e.g., social media post).

3.6 Feedback Process

The DDSB welcomes feedback on how we provide accessible service. Feedback will help us identify barriers and respond to concerns. Feedback may be provided through our public [website](#) and is monitored by the Communications Department and forwarded to the appropriate individuals for review and response where required.

Our Student/Family Human Rights Issue, Incident and Complaint Resolution Procedure further outlines options and accessible ways in which students and families can raise issues and complaints related to accessibility and accommodations.

3.7 Procurement

The DDSB incorporates accessibility criteria and features when procuring or acquiring goods, services, or facilities except when it is not practicable to do so. Accessibility requirements are included in service, equipment, and technology procurement processes as part of the Terms and Conditions for all bid documents.

Additionally, emphasis is placed on streamlining the specifications of the purchase requirements to remove barriers where possible, for the procurement of assistive devices for students.

The DDSB will take into account the impact on persons with disabilities when purchasing new equipment, designing new systems or planning a new initiative.

3.8 Employment

Recruitment and Hiring

The DDSB will communicate its commitment to meeting its legal duty to accommodate and will proactively request information about potential accommodation needs during the recruitment process, including through job postings and interview invitations, as well as during the hiring process. We notify employees, job applicants and the public that accommodation can be made during recruitment and hiring processes for the individual to actively participate in any assessment and selection stage, where requested. We consult with the applicants and provide or arrange suitable accommodation once requested.

Workplace Policies and Supports, Individuals Accommodations Plans and Return to Work Process.

We notify successful applicants and existing employees of policies for accommodating employees with disabilities and how to access employee accommodations through the Ability Management department as part of the Human Rights Inclusive Design and Accommodation Procedure for employees.

We consult with employees when arranging for the provision of suitable accommodation in a manner that considers accessibility needs due to ability, disabilities and neurodivergent traits. We consult with the person making the request in determining the suitability of an accommodation plan for the employee to complete the essential duties of their job and have a written process to develop individual accommodation plans for employees.

Workplace Emergency Response Information

Where needed, we also provide customized emergency information to help an employee with a disability during an emergency. With the employee's consent, we will provide workplace emergency information to a designated person who will help that employee during an emergency. This includes ensuring the individualized workplace emergency response information transfers with an employee when they move to a different location in the organization.

Performance Management

In conducting performance management, the DDSB will take into account the specific accessibility needs of employees with disabilities (including individual accommodation plans); for example, accounting for the difference between disability related issues and performance related issues.

Advancement

When Considering career development and advancement, the DDSB will take into account the specific accessibility needs of employees with disabilities (Including individuals accommodation plans). For example, professional development materials or training will be provided in formats that account for a person's disability.

Redeployment

In cases of redeployment, the DDSB will take into account accessibility needs (including individual accommodation plans) when redeploying employee with disabilities, For example, factoring in the employee's accommodation plan to select a new job that would suit them.

3.9 Design of Public Spaces

The DDSB meets accessibility laws, codes and requirements when designing, building, or making major changes to public spaces. Our public spaces include schools and their grounds including parking lots, outdoor play spaces, gathering spaces on school property both inside and outside, and other board office and central administrative buildings.

3.10 Support Person or Assistive Service Person

Assistive service person refers to a person who assists or interprets for a person with a disability as the services of the Board are accessed. An assistive service person is distinct from an employee who supports a student in the system. A community member with a disability who is accompanied by a support person or assistive service person may have that person accompany them on our premises.

3.11 Self-Serve Kiosks

The Board will incorporate accessibility features when designing, procuring, or acquiring self-serve kiosks.

3.12 Accessible School transportation

The Board will provide integrated accessible school transportation, or appropriate alternative accessible transportation services for students with disabilities where integrated services are not possible or not the best option due to the nature of the disability or safety concerns.

3.13 Review Process

The Director of Education and designates will review and update this procedure as necessary and appropriate but it shall be reviewed at least every five years.

4.0 Reference Documents

4.1 Policies

- [Human Rights, Anti-Discrimination and Anti-Racism Policy](#)
- [Use of Service Animals in Schools Policy](#)

4.2 Procedures

- [Human Rights, Anti-Discrimination and Anti-Racism Procedure](#)
- [Human Rights Inclusive Design and Accommodation Procedure](#)
- [Student/Family Human Rights Issue, Incident and Complaint Resolution Procedure](#)
- [Human Rights Roles, Responsibilities, and Accountability Framework](#)
- [Complaint Procedure-Human Rights, Safe and Respectful Workplace and Harassment Prevention](#)
- [Use of Service Animals in Schools Procedure](#)

4.3 Other Documents

- [Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005](#)
- [Ontario Human Rights Code](#)
- [Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulation](#)
- [Web Content Accessibility Guidelines](#)
- [Ontarians with Disabilities Act](#)
- [The Education Act](#)
- [Ontario Building Code](#)
- [Blind Person's Rights Act](#)
- [Service and Supports to Promote the Social Inclusion of Persons with Developmental Disabilities Act](#)
- [DDSB Accessibility Plan](#)
- [DDSB Accessibility Guide](#)

Appendix:

None

Effective Date

2024-01-05

Amended

YYYY-MM-DD